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Date: Tue, 30 Sep 2008 16:59:06 -0700 (PDT)

From: "mary mctaggart" &lt;cavelanding@yahoo.com&gt;

Subject: Delta Vision Strategic Plan - Fourth Staff Draft

To: dv\_context@calwater.ca.gov

September 30, 2008

Phil Isenberg, Chair

Members of the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force

Re: Comments on the Fourth Staff Draft - Delta Vision Strategic Plan

Ladies and Gentlemen:

My comments/questions are directed to the BRTF in the spirit of Mr. Isenberg's observation that "California can solve these challenging water and environmental problems intelligently, but only if we are willing to be fully honest in public debates." (Vol. 1, p.8, line 22-24)

- What is the real role of the Public Advisory Group (PAG) in the "revitalized Delta"? What membership will it have, how will they be chosen, and in what way and for what sort of "advice" will the CDEW Council rely upon its input? For what purposes will the Science and Engineering Program be "coordinating" with the PAG, other than for what sound like public relations activities? (Vol. 2, p.58, lines 30-33) What does it really mean for the CDEW Plan to be "actively coordinated with" the PAG to "ensure stakeholder participation"? Does the BRTF envision a heavy representation of in-Delta interests in order to avail itself of their on-the-ground/water real-world knowledge/expertise with a view toward avoiding the costly and time-consuming missteps that all-too-often characterize governmental projects? What real purpose, other than satisfying legal mandates (one of which appears to be the demands of environmental justice law) will the PAG serve? (see Vol. 2, p.62, lines 36 - 39)
- With regard to Strategy 6.3 and emergency response, please be aware that the Delta is *really* "unique" in the complexity and seeming irrationality of its traffic circulation conditions and landforms. Although it is fairly close to several urban areas, very few residents of these cities have the foggiest notion (no pun intended) of where things are here or how to find them. For this reason, please realize that it is a matter of life and death for Delta residents that any plan formulated to keep them safe rely to the uttermost on the input and ongoing involvement of local Delta entities: reclamation districts, fire departments, police/sheriff's deputies, and to a lesser degree the five counties. Delta residents will not embrace or trust a plan drawn up to any degree by outsiders, because to do so would put themselves and their loved ones in jeopardy. Please encourage state and federal agencies to, for once, let the locals lead in the preparation and practice of the "collaboratively prepared Delta-wide regional response plan" and the "comprehensive series of emergency management and preparation actions" (Vol. 2, p.48-49).
- The graphics you have selected to illustrate the "Three Components Support[ing] the Protection of the Delta as a Place" (Figures 1-9a-c) are perhaps the most telling illustrations so far in this process of how far off the mark the BRTF has been in their characterization of the Delta today. Yes, Delta people are rightly proud of their unique history tied to a unique landscape, but Delta planners seem to think that the Delta can only be preserved by enshrining the place in its past by some sort of federal designation. Today's Delta farmers survive because they are innovative, adaptive, and creative. You have chosen to illustrate the recreational industry, which your Plan favors, with a photo of present-day Delta water-based activity. But the selections for farming and for the Delta itself come from the early parts of the last century. Please have the full honesty (see above) to show Delta agriculture at its best today, and if you dare, show some pictures of the future your Plan envisions for "appropriate Delta agriculture" "providing public benefits": carbon farming and subsidence reversal farming (read cattails and tules), flood conveyance, wildlife habitat, etc. Does the State no longer recognize the public benefit of farming that actually feeds people, especially given that the State's population has doubled in less than 40 years? To paraphrase an old milk commercial, you never outgrow your need for food, though we are presently trying hard to outgrow our preference for

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- oil.
- Regarding the abandon with which the Strategic Plan promotes tourism as a device to enhance the Delta economy, please remember that the Delta will only survive and thrive ecologically to the degree that it remains for the most part a place apart. It is inconsistent to promote the development of major "gateways" to what the BRTF sees as a "major recreational destination for the millions of people who will move to northern California in the coming decades" in the same area, namely the above sea-level periphery of the Delta, as you are proposing to place "large blocks of land encompassing broad topographic variability" for habitat restoration. (Vol. 2, p.6, lines 10-14; Vol.2, p.11, lines 22-25). The potential for the Delta to become this tourism Mecca is not "virtually limitless", no matter how badly Delta planners may want to sell this idea to powers-that-be.
  - The Strategic Plan proposes massive transfers of land from private to public management, if not indeed to public ownership (Appendix Table 1, goal 2-4, goal 3- 1,3,4,5,7,10). Large portions of this transfer is predicated upon the potential for sea-level rise, an event that no one can truly predict but which has been used, along with equally unpredictable seismic threat, to create a crisis scenario that serves to "drive" the need for what must look to any objective observer like one of the most breathtaking land and power grabs in American history. Please note, however, that even so powerful and venerable an environmental group as the Environmental Defense Fund promotes the idea of relying on private lands as the best approach for pursuing habitat and conservation goals. To quote, "Most landowners want what's best for their land...the best means of advancing conservation on private lands is through voluntary efforts...incentives can accomplish what laws and regulations cannot...There aren't enough pots of money or willing sellers to meet conservation goals by simply purchasing land, and maintaining a vital agricultural economy and social fabric is of great importance to the nation." (<http://www.edf.org/page.cfm?tagID=442>). In view of this, and of the boundless energy, pride, ground-level knowledge, and efficiency of the Delta farmer, please think hard about wooing and regarding these irreplaceable people as partners instead of adversaries (or worse, as passionate, but ignorant hicks) in your Delta Vision Strategic Plan. Top-down planning of environmental and farming activities has been tried elsewhere and found wanting - can't we Californians do better?

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Mary McTaggart  
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